

A True and Exact  
**RELATION**

Of the Late  
*Prodigious Earthquake & Eruption*  
O F

**Mount Ætna,**

Or, MONTE-GIBELLO;

As it came in a LETTER

Written to His Majesty from *Naples*

By the Right Honorable

*The Earle of Winchilsea,*

His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*,  
who in his Return from thence, Visiting *Catania* in  
the Island of *Sicily*, was an Ey-witness of

*That Dreadfull Spectacle.*

Together with a more particular *Narrative*  
of the same, as it is Collected out of severall  
Relations sent from *CATANIA*.

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**Published by Authority.**

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*Hollis fund*

A true and exact Relation of the late prodigious Earthquake and Eruption of the Mount *Ætna*, or *Monte-Gibello*, as it came in a Letter written to His Majesty from *Naples*, by the Right Honourable the Earl of *Winchilsea*, His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his return from thence, visited *Catania*, an eye witness of that dreadful spectacle.

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May it please your MAJESTY,



*I* my Voyage from Malta to this place, wherein I have used all the diligence the season hath given me leave, I touched at the City of Catania in Sicily, and was there most kindly Invited by the Bishop to lodge

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in his Palace, which I accepted, that so I might be the better able to inform Your Majesty of that extraordinary Fire, which comes from Mount Gibel 15 miles distant from that City; which for its horridness in the aspect, for the vast quantity thereof, (for it is 15 miles in length, and 7 in breadth) for its monstrous devastation, and quick progress, may be termed an Inundation of Fire, a Floud of Fire, Cinders and burning Stones, burning with that Rage as to advance into the Sea 600 yards, and that to a mile in breadth, which I saw; and that which did augment my admiration was, to see in the Sea this matter like ragged rocks, burning in four fathom water, two fathom higher then the Sea it self, some parts liquid and moving, and throwing off, not without great violence, the stones about it, which like a crust of a vast bigness, and red hot, fell  
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into the Sea every moment, in some place or other, causing a great and horrible noise, smook and hissing in the Sea; and thus more and more coming after it, making a firm foundation in the Sea it self. I stayed there from nine a Clock on Saturday morning, to seven next morning, and this Mountain of Fire and Stones, with Cinders, had advanced into the Sea 20 yards at least, in several places; in the middle of this Fire, which burn'd in the Sea, it hath formed a passage like to a River, with its Banks on each side very steep and craggy, and in this Channel moves the greatest quantity of this Fire, which is the most liquid, with Stones of the same composition, and Cinders all red hot, swimming upon the fire of a great magnitude; from this River of Fire doth proceed under the great Masse of the Stones which are generally three fathom high all  
over

over the Country, where it burns and in other places much more, there are secret Conduits or Rivulets of this liquid matter, which Communicates Fire and heat into all parts more or less, and melts the Stones and Cinders by fits in those places where it toucheth them, over and over again; where it meets with Rocks or Houses of the same matter (as many are) they melt and go away with the Fire; where they find other compositions they turn them to lime or ashes, (as I am informed.) The composition of this Fire, Stones and Cinders, are Sulphur, Nitre, Quick-silver, Sal-Armoniac, Lead, Iron, Brass, and all other Mettals. It moves not regularly, nor constantly down hill; in some places it hath made the Valleys Hills, and the Hills that are not high are now Valleys. When it was night I went upon two Towers in divers places, and  
could

could plainly see at 10 miles distance, as we judged, the Fire to begin to run from the Mountain in a direct line, the flame to ascend as high and as big as one of the highest and greatest Steeples in Your Majesties Kingdoms, and to throw up great Stones into the Air; I could discern the River of Fire to descend the Mountain of a terrible fiery or red colour, and stones of a paler Red, to swim thereon, and to be, some as big as an ordinary Table. We could see this fire to move in several other places, and all the Country covered with Fire, ascending with great Flames, in many places, smoaking like to a violent furnace of Iron melted, making a noise with the great pieces that fell, especially those which fell into the Sea. A Cavalier of Malta, who lives there, and attended me, told me, that the River was as liquid where it issues out of the Mountain, as water,

water, and came out like a Torrent with great violence, and is five or six fathom deep, and as broad, and that no stones do sink therein. I assure Your Majesty, no Pen can express how terrible it is, nor can all the Art and Industry of the world quench, or divert that which is burning in the Country. In 40 dayes time it hath destroyed the habitations of 27 thousand persons, made two Hills of one, 1000 paces high, a piece, and one is four miles in compass, as Your Majesty will see by the draught that I take the boldness to send herewith; it was the best I could get, but hath nothing of the Progress into the Sea; the confusion was so great in the City, which is almost surrounded with Mountains of Fire, that I could not get any to draw one, but I have taken care to have one sent after me for Your Majesty. Of 20000 persons which inhabited Catania,

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nia, 3000 did only remain; all their Goods are carried away, the Cannons of Brass are removed out of the Castle, some great Bells taken down, the City-Gates Walled up next the Fire, and preparation made all to abandon the City.

That Night which I lay there, it Rained Ashes all over the City, and Ten Miles at Sea it troubled my Eyes. This Fire in its Progress met with a Lake of four Miles in compass, and it was not only satisfied to fill it up, though it was four fathom deep, but hath made of it a Mountain.

I send also to Your Sacred Majesty a Relation in Print which the Bishop gave me, wherein the Beginning is Related, and several Curious Passages. I most humbly beseech Your Pardon for the hindring Your Majesty so long from Your better Employments: And I beseech You,

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*Great Sir, ever to believe I Love and  
Reverence Your Person above All Ex-  
pression: for, I am*

*Naples the 27 of April  
7 of May.  
1669:*

*Your Majesties*

*Most Obedient, Most Humble,  
and Most Faithful*

*Subject and Servant*

*Winchilsea.*

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A Particular  
NARRATIVE  
Of the late Dreadful  
Earthquake  
AND  
ERUPTION  
As it is Collected out of several Relations from  
*CATANIA.*



*Mount Ætna, or Monte Gibello, a Mountain so Renowned throughout the World for its height and greatness, but much more for those Prodigious Flames, Smoak, and Ashes which it hath cast out from the top of it, whilst the other parts are continually (even in the midst of Summer) cover'd with Snow, has been for many Ages observ'd once, or sometimes oftner, in the space*

of about fifteen years, to throw up more than ordinary Flames, with much Smoak and Stones, and great quantities of Ashes; which (though terrible to the neighbouring Towns and Villages) was yet wont, in little time, to abate of its fury, and prove but seldom more injurious to the Countrey near it. than by communicating largely its ashes, which though for the present it did somewhat incommode them, they had afterwards a considerable Compensation in the product of their Lands, which by this means were render'd more fruitful.

But on Friday the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1669, the Sun was observed before its setting to appear of a pale and dead colour, which (being contrary to what it ever before appear'd to us) struck no small terror into the Inhabitants, all Objects appearing also of the same colour, with a paleness received from that of the Sun. The same night happened in this City as well as the whole Countrey hereabouts, a terrible and unusual Earthquake, whose strong and unequal motions, joyned with horrible Roarings from *Monte-Gibello* exceedingly frightened the Inhabitants, but was so extraordinarily violent in the Countrey adjacent, that the People were forced

forced to abandon their houses and to fly into the Fields to avoid the danger threatned them from the falling of their houses. The Village of *Nicolosi* was of all others the most dreadfully handled by this furious Earthquake, the houses and other buildings being shaken all in pieces, and buried in their own Ruines; the poor People (who had preserved their lives by a timely flight, with such little of their Goods as their hasty fears would permit them to carry out with them) continued a night or two in the fields, beholding with grief and astonishment the ruine of their habitations: but observing that by these violent concussions, the Earth began to open in several places, and to threaten them with inevitable ruine, they fled, though with much trouble and amazement to this City. These shakings of the Earth being so frequent and violent, that the People went reeling and staggering, with much difficulty supporting one another from falling, in so much as what with their want of sleep, the pains they were forced to take in travelling, and the great terrors imprinted on them by what they had seen and suffered, they appeared at their arrival in this City as so many distracted People, wholly insensible of what they did.

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This dreadful convulsion of the Earth was immediately followed on Monday March 11. about 10 at night by three terrible Eruptions, much about the same time, and at little distance one from the other.

These said Eruptions were observed to be on the side of *Monte Gibello*, about 2 miles beyond the Mountain, called *Montpileri*, from whence with a terrible noise it threw up its flames with much fury and violence about a hundred yards in height, its noise not roaring only inwards from the Belly of the Mountain as before, but violently cracking like peals of Ordnance or Thunder, from the side of it throwing out vast stones, some of them of 300 pound weight, which being (as it were) shot through the Air, fell several miles distant from the place, whilst the whole Air was filled with Smoak, burning Cinders, and Ashes, which fell like a fiery Rain upon the Countrey.

In the mean time issued from the side of this Prodigious Mountain a vast Torrent of Melted and burning Matter, which, like an Inundation drowned, as in a Flood of Fire, the Countrey on this side of it.

This Burning River ran down upon the  
Mountain

Mountain *Montpileri*, which, opposing its direct course, it divided it self into two streams, which encompassed the said Mountain; one of them taking its way by *La Guardia*, the Convent of *St. Anne*, and *Malpasso*, the other by the Towns of *Montpileri* and *Falicchi*; which in few hours were wholly destroyed and lost, not so much as any sign of them remaining, with several lesser Villages and Farms, and with them the famous Image of the blessed Lady of the *Annunciata*; which, though highly revered throughout the whole *Island*, esteemed the Wonder of *Sicily* and the whole World, and to which the people with much Devotion resorted in Pilgrimage from the remotest parts, was also swallowed up and consumed by this dreadful Torrent.

This fiery and burning Deluge immediately spread it self to above six miles in breadth, seeming to be somewhat of the colour of melted and burning Glass; but, as it cools, becomes hard and Rocky, and every where in its passage leaves Hills and Pyramids of that Matter behind it.

At the same time *Monte Gibello* from its top raged with dreadful Flames, which with its noise  
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and concussions of the Earth still continuing, added not a little to the Terror of the People, who ran with Cries and Lamentations about the City and Countrey, expecting nothing but to be swallowed up or consumed by Fire, having no other apprehensions but of Death, and a general Conflagration.

The two Torrents of Fire forward, destroying all things in their way, and by Wednesday, March 13th, had on the West-side branched it self into several streams, and over-ran *Campo Rotundo*, *St. Pietro*, and *Mostorbianco*, with *La Potielli*, and *St. Antonino*; and on the East-part ruin'd the lower part of *Mascalucia*, and *Le Placcht*, taking its way towards this City.

On Thursday the 14th, the Wind came Eastwards, on which day fell abundance of Rain, which abated not the progress of the Fire; which on the East-side had from *Mascalucia* made its way to *St. Giovanni di Galermo*, the lower part whereof it destroy'd; and passing on, seem'd to threaten this City on one side, as did that on the West-side the other.

As the Fire approached, the Religious every where appeared with much Devotion, carrying  
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in Procession their Reliques, especially those of *St. Agatha*, the famous Martyr of *Catania*, in which they reposed no small confidence, followed by great multitudes of People, some of them mortifying themselves with Whips and other signes of Pennance, with great complaints and cries, expressing their dreadful expectation of the events of those Prodigious Fiery Inundations.

Whilst the People were thus busied in their Devotions, and astonisht by their Fears, News was brought to the Magistrates of the City, that a considerable number of Thieves and Robbers had taken the opportunity of this general Distraction, to make a Prey of the already distressed People, and that they had murdered several of them for their Goods; and that it was to be fear'd that the City of *Catania* itself might run some danger from the great numbers of them which were about the Countrey, and from thence took their opportunities to get into the Town. Whereupon, consultation being had for the prevention of farther mischief from them, the Commander of the Castle was Ordered with a considerable number of Horse, and a party of *Spaniards*, to secure the Countrey,

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and City against these Robbers; who immediately sent out several parties with his Provost Marshal, with Orders to seize on all suspected persons, and such as were not able to give a good account of themselves: and, for such as were taken in the Fact robbing, to Execute them by Martial Law, without any farther Tryal; and accordingly caused three pair of Gallows to be set up for their speedy Execution; one before the Gate *Di Aci*, a second in the *Market place*, and a third before the Gate *Della Decima*, setting strong Guards upon the Gates of the City, and causing all suspected Houses to be searched, an Account to be given in of all Lodgers and such persons to be secured, as could any ways fall under a suspicion.

The poor People out of the Countrey being by this Prodigious calamity stript out of all their Estates, and reduced to great extremity, fled most of them for refuge and relief to this City, with great Lamentations moving the Charity of the Magistrates, who were readily inclined to give them the best assistance they were able; and the Citizens moved by their Complaints and Sufferings, freely open'd their  
Doors

Doors, filling their Houses with as many of those distressed People, as they could possibly receive; the Bishop, and all persons of Quality and Estate contributing largely for their support, till better Order could be taken for the disposing of them.

The City of *Messina* also, and several other Cities (informed of this extraordinary Calamity) sent hither large supplies of Provisions, offering their best assistance to this place, in case of extremity.

All the Elements at this time seemed to make War upon us, and to conspire together for the punishment of the Inhabitants: the Air was continually darkened with Clouds and Smoke, agitated by great and violent Winds, and oftentimes showed down great Rains, insomuch as the Sun from the beginning of these Eruptions, very seldom appeared to us, and when it did, (with extraordinary paleness,) for a little time only, and (as it were, abhorring so dreadful a Spectacle) soon hid its face again under a thick Cloud.

The Sea ran much higher than it was wont to do, and by its extraordinary Roaring, and in some places overflowing its Banks, added

not a little to our Consternation. The Land every where infested with Thieves, in so much that till by the extraordinary care taken by the Magistrates and Officers, severe execution was don upon such as were apprehended in the Fact, no Person was able to stir abroad without danger of his life; whilst the Fire, by this prodigious overflowing of the Mountain, threatened to take possession of all.

On Friday the 15th the stream of fiery Matter which destroyed the lower part of *St. Giovanni di Galermo*, divided it self into two parts, one of its branches taking its way toward *Moſterbianco*, the other threatening the City of *Catania*, but this last was observed to move with more slowness than before, having in 24 hours time scarcely gained 20 paces.

On the 18th being Monday, the Torrents being still seen to draw nearer and nearer to this City, the Senate with Monseignor *Cambuchi*, the Bishop of this place, followed by all the Clergy Secular and Regular, and an infinite number of People, went in a solemn Procession out of this City to *Monte de St. Sofia*, carrying out with greatest Devotion their choicest

choicest Relicks, and upon an Altar erected in view of the Mountain, exposed them, where they Celebrated Mass, and used the Exorcismes accustomed upon such extraordinary occasions, all which time the Mountain ceased not as before with excessive roaring to throw up its smoak and flames with extraordinary violence, and abundance of great stones, which were carried through the Air, some of them falling within their view, though at ten miles distance from the Eruption; the Ashes which proceeded from thence were scattered in great abundance, as well on this City as on the Countrey adjacent, every where in the Fields with Cinders, and the heat of the said Ashes destroying the Grass, which obliged the People to drive away their Cattle to a farther distance, which would otherwise have perished for want of food.

These streams of ruine daily crept nearer and nearer to this City, but by uneven and irregular motions, according as it was more or less supplyd from its fountain; but on Wednesday the 20th, we perceived that that branch of it which seemed most to threaten this City from *St. Giovanni di Galermo* was wholly extinguisht, and the other

ther which bent its course towards *Moſter-bianco* ran but flowly and gave us ſome hopes that its fury was alſo near ſpent, but the other *Torrent* which had before overflown *Moſterbianco*, continued its motion with as much violence as ever, being in breadth above a Muſquet ſhot over; but in probability could not eaſily overflow to the Weſtwards which was defended by its Rocky ſituation; another branch which ran by *Santo Pietro* was obſerved to be much larger then the reſt, and its ſtream more quick and active, but meeting with ſome oppoſition in its way, it made ſome ſtop, only ſending out a *Rivolet* toward the Eaſtwards about three or four yords wide, of its moſt ſubtle and active matter, which directed its course towards a ſmall Village about a furlong diſtant from its main ſtream; another Branch threatened *Campo Rotundo*, but bent its course Weſtwards towards the Farme of *Valcorrente*, where its Fiery body was ſcattered into ſeveral deep and Rocky places, without any conſiderable damage.

About this time we had hopes that the violence of this eruption had been over, the Mountain not throwing out its Flames with  
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that violence as before, and its noise and roaring in a great measure ceased.

Those who at nearest distance took a view of the Mountain, informed, that the top of it was fallen in, and the Mountain supposed to want near a mile of its former height; that the largest of the Mouths from whence these Fiery streams were vented, was about halfe a mile in compass, but the view of this dreadful inundation carried so much terror in it as they were not able to express; from all these Mouths were vomited Rivers of a thick and fiery substance of stone and Metals melted, whose depth was various according to the several places it filled in its passage, in some places 4, in others 8, 12 or 15 yards and upwards; its breadth in some places 6 miles, in others much more; its Flame like that of Brimstone, and its motion like that of Quicksilver; advancing ordinarily very slowly, unless where it was provoked by the addition of a fresh Torrent, or some considerable descent. Where-soever it passed, it left large heaps of its congealed matter, with which it covered and burnt the Earth, melting the walls of Castles and Houses, throwing down and consuming all before

before it, nothing being yet found able to resist its force, nor any thing able to quench its burning, Water being observed rather to add to its fury; wheresoever it has passed, it has left its dreadful marks behind it, levelling some hills and raising others, so much changing the situation, that not the least trace of any place or Town remains, nothing being to be seen but confused heaps of ragged Stone, which yielding a noisome fume, strikes terror and astonishment into all that behold it.

On Friday the 22, the Mountain again roared with much loudness, and threw up from its Mouth a vast quantity of Matter, which formed two large Hills higher and larger then that of *Montpileri*, with a large bank of the same matter to the Eastwards, sending down a violent stream of its liquid Matter towards *Malpasso*, much enlarging the former Current, and passing thence to *Campo Rotundo* and *Santo Pietro*, compleated the Ruines of those Towns, driving furiously towards *Moster-bianco*; the other stream by *Santo Giovanni di Galermo* being wholly diverted and extinguishd.

From this time till the 25th, the Mountain continued silent, but then it burst out again with

with more force than ever before, its noise much louder, like peals of Ordnance, and so forcible and lasting, as for 24 hours it caused a shaking and trembling in our Buildings, the Air so filled with smoak and Ashes, as darkened the face of the Sky.

The Birds and Fowl about this time, either through want of Food, or illness of Air, which was corrupted with the noisome smells arising from these Burnings, were observed to lie dead in all places.

On the 28th, the Grand Current was advanced near the City as far as the old *Capucins*, which struck so great a Terror into the People, that most of them left the City, only some Officers remaining with such persons as were under their Command, who have secured and sent away the *Magazine* and all the Artillery from the Castle.



*A Later Relation from Catania,  
bearing Date the 27th of April,  
gives us this farther Account:  
viz.*

**T**He Dreadful Inundation from *Monte Gibello* having destroyed many *Castles* and *Towns*, with an infinite loss, and utter ruine to the Inhabitants, arrived lately with a renewed Force at *Mostor-bianco*, which it has wholly ruin'd, from thence passing on to *Albanelli*, in four Dayes space destroyed all the Gardens and Vineyards, with 63 Thousand Vines.

On *Wednesday, April 16*. With an Impetuous Fiery Torrent it came towards *Sardanello*, where all the remainder of the Inhabitants of this City were Spectators of it, which resembled

a River of melted and burning Brass, about ten Ells wide, running with swiftness to the Arch of *Marcus Marcellus*, a Famous Piece of Antiquity, and passing under it, ruin'd about 6 Ells of it, which was the breadth of the Current in that place : from thence it ran to *Madonna di Monserrato*, which it wholly destroyed : then falling down to *Madonna delle Gratie*, it entred in at one Gate, and passed through another, without any considerable hurt, and running through the Gate *Della Decima*, filled all the Plaine *Di Schiara Viva*, where it was above six Ells deep. Then taking its way towards the Bulwark, on the Sea-side, under the Castle of this City, it ran by, two Ells deep into the Sea ; in which, ( to the great wonder of all that saw it ) it has made its Progress a mile in length, and as much in breadth, and is drawing towards the Gate of the Channel, which gives us great Apprehensions, least it may that way Invade the City it self: Nor is there less Danger on the side *Del Tindaro*, where there runs a great Torrent of the same Active matter, which drawes near, and seemes to threaten

the Walls, and is in that place about a mile in breadth, having over-flowed and destroyed all the Gardens, from the Gate *Della Decima*, as farr as *Madonna delli Amellati*.

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*A LIST of the most considerable  
Towns and Places Ruin'd and  
destroyed by the Dreadful Earth-  
quake and Eruptions.*

**T**He Town of *Nicolosi* wholly Ruin'd by  
the *Earthquake*.

The Towns { *Padara,* } the greatest part de-  
of { *Tre Castagne* } stroyed by the Earth-  
quake.

The Towns of	[ <i>La Guardia,</i> <i>Malpasso,</i> <i>Campo Rotundo,</i> <i>La Potielli,</i> <i>St. Antonino,</i> <i>St. Pietro,</i> <i>Mostorbianco,</i> <i>Montpilèri,</i> <i>La Annunziata,</i> <i>Falicchi,</i> <i>Placebi,</i>	] Wholly Over- flowed, Confu- med and lost in this Fiery Inun- dation, with all the Lands be- longing to them no Footsteps of them remain- ing.

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The Towns { *Mascalucia* } 2 Ruin'd  
 of { *S. Giovanni de Galermo*, } in part.

The large *Gardens* and *Vineyards* of *Albanelli*  
*Overflown* and *Destroyed*.

The Famous Piece of *Antiquity* of *Marcus*  
*Marcellus* much Ruin'd.

*Madonna de Monserrato* destroyed, besides ma-  
 ny *Castles*, *Farmes*, and other Places, which  
 have run the same Fortune, whose Names  
 we for brevity pass over.

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FINIS.

